

Christmas Cactus

TIPS FOR GETTING CHRISTMAS CACTUS BLOOMING

- **Light Control:**
 - Christmas cacti need shorter daylight hours to set buds. Starting in early October, ensure they receive 12-14 hours of darkness daily. You can achieve this by placing the plant in a dark room or covering it with a cloth.
 - Ensure the plant gets bright but indirect sunlight during the daytime. Too much direct sun can cause sunburn to the stems.
 - **Darkness Stimulates Blooming:**
 - A key trick to trigger blooming is to give your Christmas cactus uninterrupted darkness for about 6 weeks leading up to the holiday season. This mimics the natural conditions it would experience in its native habitat.
 - A simple way to do this is to place it in a room that you don't frequently use, or cover it with a dark cloth or bag from early evening until morning for 6 weeks.
 - **Temperature Control:**
 - Cool nights are crucial. Maintain nighttime temperatures between 55-60°F (13-16°C).
 - Avoid placing your cactus near radiators, heaters, or frequently used fireplaces, as excessive warmth can prevent blooming.
 - **Watering Routine:**
 - During its blooming period, the Christmas cactus prefers to be kept on the moist side. Water the plant when the top inch of soil feels dry to the touch.
 - However, be cautious of over-watering, which can lead to root rot. Ensure your pot has good drainage.
 - **Fertilization:**
 - During its growth period (April to September), feed the plant with a balanced, water-soluble fertilizer every 4-6 weeks.
 - Once buds appear, stop fertilizing until after the blooms have finished.
 - **Limit Stress:**
 - Like many of us, the Christmas cactus doesn't appreciate being moved around too much. Once you've found a suitable spot for it, try to keep it there.
 - Avoid touching the buds. This can cause them to drop prematurely.
 - **Pruning:**
 - After the blooming period is over (usually in late winter), prune the cactus by pinching off a few sections of each stem. This encourages the plant to branch out and can result in more flowers next season.
 - **Check for Pests:**
 - Occasionally inspect your cactus for common pests like aphids, spider mites, and fungus gnats.
 - If you notice any, treat the plant immediately with insecticidal soap or neem oil.
 - **Provide Humidity:**
 - Remember, the Christmas cactus is native to humid jungles. If your home is dry, consider placing the pot on a tray filled with pebbles and water to increase the humidity around it.
-